

2007

THE STATE OF THE POOR



The Fairfax County Community Action Advisory Board

CAAB Officers

Phil Rosenthal, Chairman

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The Fairfax County Community Action Advisory Board has prepared this document to highlight the challenges faced by low-income residents of Fairfax County who struggle every day to pay for basic needs, housing and health care while living in one of the most affluent counties in the United States.

This document compiles data from various sources to provide a snapshot of the county's low-income population.

The intention is to update this information periodically as a resource for policy makers as they work to address the needs of low-income county residents.

NOTE:

Data sources are listed in parentheses following each entry. A full list of data sources is included on Page 10.

Overview of Fairfax County

Fairfax County is one of the wealthiest counties in the nation. Increasing diversity and an aging population are just two of the changes occurring in this growing community.

- Fairfax County is 399 square miles.
- Population estimate (2006) for Fairfax County and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church is 1,043,664 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 Population Estimates)
- Median household income (2005) - \$94,610 (ACS)
- Median income is second highest in the nation (ASC)
- Median age – 38.1 (ACS)
- Proportion of population under 18 – 25.6 percent (ACS)
- Proportion of population 65 and older – 8.6 percent (ACS)
- Racial/ethnic diversity (ACS):
 - White – 60.4 percent
 - Asian – 15.7 percent
 - Hispanic/Latino – 12.6 percent
 - African American – 9.1 percent
 - Other – 2.2 percent
- If current trends continue, Fairfax will continue to grow as a multicultural community with 45 percent of the population being racial/ethnic minorities by 2010 (ATF).

Poverty

While the county overall is very wealthy, a significant number of people still live in poverty. The total number of people in poverty is one of the highest in the state, due to the county's large population.

- Poverty in 2007 is defined as a family of four earning less than \$20,650 per year. (HHS)
- Poverty rate in 2005 was 5 percent of the population – 51,544 people. (ACS)
- 7 percent of all children (under 18) live in poverty. (ACS)
- 9 percent of children under 5 live in poverty. (ACS)
- 3.6 percent of families live in poverty. (ACS)
- 11.8 percent of African Americans live in poverty. (ACS)
- 9.5 percent of Hispanics live in poverty. (ACS)
- 8.1 percent of the foreign born population live in poverty. (ACS)
- 20.6 percent of families with a female head of household, no father present and children under 18 live in poverty. (ACS)
- There are 117,030 county residents with incomes under 200 percent of poverty. (ACS)

Self-Sufficiency

An alternative to the federal poverty rate has been developed by the organization Wider Opportunities for Women (www.wowonline.org). The WOW Self-Sufficiency Standard determines the amount of income needed by a family to meet their basic needs without relying on government or other assistance. For a full list of family sizes and self-sufficiency levels, see page 11.

- In Fairfax County in 2006, a minimum household income of \$62,918 was needed to meet basic needs for a family of four (2 adults, 1 preschooler and 1 school-aged child) (VDSS)
- If both adults work, they both have to make at least \$15.12/hr. to achieve the minimum income. If only one parent works, they need to make \$30.25/hr. (VDSS)
- An estimated 115,000 (11.3 percent) Fairfax County residents in 2005 lived below their respective self-sufficiency standard. (CAAB)
- The 2006 estimate of the self-sufficiency standard for the family composition listed above rose 22 percent since 2002 and 27 percent since 1999. (VDSS 2006; WOW 1999 & 2002)
- Demand for public assistance programs administered by the county's Department of Family Services has increased 70 percent since 2001. (2006 ASSB Annual Report).

Employment

Unemployment levels in the county are low compared to the national average. Average wages are higher, but many jobs are compensated at a level that leaves employees below the self-sufficiency standard.

- Unemployment rate in February 2007 was 2.1 percent (VEC)
- Labor workforce participation rate for women in 2005 was 64.7 percent, exceeding the US rate of 59 percent. (ACS)
- The widening household income gap between the wealthiest and poorest households in Fairfax County is partially due to a widening gap between skilled and unskilled employment. In 1970, the national average wage of a college educated worker was about 59 percent higher than that of a high-school educated worker. In 1996, it was about 75 percent higher nationwide. (ATF) In Fairfax County in 2005 it was 95 percent higher. (ACS)
- Minimum wage remains at \$5.15 and has not been adjusted in over 10 years. An individual making minimum wage would earn \$10,712 for a 40 hour week (Congress passed a bill to raise the minimum wage to \$7.25, but it had not been signed or vetoed by the President as of April 2007.)
- The median annual salary paid by Fairfax County employers in 2005 for many professions is below the current poverty level for a family of four (VEC):
 - Housekeeper - \$18,700
 - Cashier - \$18,800
 - Food Preparation Worker - \$18,800
 - Janitor - \$20,200

Housing

Affordable housing remains a major problem in the county. Although much work has been done in this area, the need continues to outpace available resources.

- The median monthly rent for a one bedroom apartment in Fairfax County in 2006 was \$1,093. (DSMHS 2006 Rental Housing Complex Analysis)
- Average monthly rent has increased 56 percent between 1996 and 2006. (DSMHS 2006 Rental Housing Complex Analysis)
- The supply of affordable housing is lagging in the county. Since 1970, median housing value increased by 10 times while median household income increased only 5 ½ times. (ATF)
- Median market value of owner-occupied housing units increased 54 percent from 2000 to 2004. (ATF)
- As of 2004, more than a quarter of homeowners spend 30 percent or more of their household income on housing. (ATF)
- Almost half (45.4 percent) of all renters pay more than 30 percent of their income on rent. This percentage has doubled since 2000. (ATF)
- In 2007, there were an estimated 1,813 homeless persons identified as living in Fairfax County—730 single individuals and 1,083 persons in families with children. (2007 Point in Time Survey, DSHMS)
- In Fiscal Year 2006 there were 3,274 requests for emergency rental assistance. (DSMHS)
- As of April 2007, there were 11,756 unduplicated people on the waiting list for the public housing, housing choice voucher and Fairfax County rental assistance programs. (DHCD).

Health

The high cost of health care hampers access to health services for low-income families in Fairfax County. Increasing costs of premiums and medications means that even with insurance, many county residents cannot afford health care.

- In Fairfax County there are an estimated 100,000 residents without health insurance. (CHS)
- Of those without health insurance, about 35,000 to 40,000 have incomes below 250 percent of poverty. (CHS)
- Only 25,000 to 30,000 of these are actively enrolled in some kind of safety-net health care program. (CHS)
- Unskilled adults are less likely to be covered by health insurance. Among Fairfax County adults who have not completed high school, 59 percent lack health insurance coverage. In comparison, less than two percent of adults in Fairfax County with at least a four-year college degree lack health insurance. (ATF)
- Fairfax County residents who indicated that their health was poor were nearly ten times more likely to lack health insurance than those residents with excellent or good health. Nearly a third of residents who have poor health lack health insurance, but only 3.1 percent of those with excellent health and 3.7 percent of those with good health lack insurance coverage. (ATF)

Language/Linguistic Isolation

A significant number of county residents lack the ability to speak English very well. This can be an impairment to their economic success.

- 15.3 percent of the population 5 years and older speak English “less than very well” as of 2005. (ACS)
- 48 percent of all foreign-born county residents 5 years and older speak English “less than very well.” (ACS)
- 7.7 percent of Fairfax County residents live in a household where no person over age 5 speaks English “very well.” This is defined as a “linguistically isolated household.” (ACS)
- Heads of households who do not speak English at all have median income less than half of those who speak English “very well.” (ATF)

Child Care

- The cost of full time preschool child care in Fairfax County in 2007 ranges from \$8,000 to \$12,000/year. (OFC)
- The median annual income of families receiving subsidized child care is \$24,798. (OFC)
- There were 3,600 Fairfax County families on the waiting list for subsidized child care as of April 2007. (OFC)

Food

- In FY 2006, Fairfax County Public Schools reported that an estimated 32,187 students were eligible for free and reduced price lunch out of 161,090 enrolled students (20 percent of enrolled students). (FCPS)
- In FY 2006, an average of 10,299 county families per month received \$1.6 million in Food Stamps, or \$19.1 million for the year. (ASSB)

Data Sources

ACS: 2005 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau 2006

ASSB: 2006 Advisory Social Services Board Annual Report, 4/07

ATF: Anticipating the Future, DSMHS, 2006

CAAB: Community Action Advisory Board, 2006

CHS: Community Health Solutions, 2006

DHCD: Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development, 2007

DSMHS: Dept. of Systems Mgmt for Human Services, 2006

HD: Fairfax County Health Department

OFC: Office for Children, 2007

VDSS: Virginia Department of Social Services, 2006

VEC: Virginia Employment Commission

WOW: Wider Opportunities for Women, Self Sufficiency Standard
Self-Sufficiency Standard for Fairfax, VA 2006

Self Sufficiency Standard for Fairfax County – 2007

# of Children	1 Adult	2 Adults
No Children	\$29,648	\$38,358
1 infant	\$50,021	\$54,538
1 preschooler	\$51,544	\$56,051
1 school age	\$44,993	\$49,455
1 teenager	\$38,974	\$43,418
2 infant	\$63,309	\$66,551
Infant + preschooler	\$65,068	\$68,055
Infant + school age	\$57,401	\$61,414
Infant + teenager	\$51,507	\$55,599
2 preschoolers	\$66,827	\$69,560
Preschooler + school age	\$59,160	\$62,918
Preschooler + teenager	\$53,021	\$57,103
2 school age	\$52,221	\$56,277
School age + teenager	\$46,424	\$50,461
2 teenagers	\$40,628	\$44,646
3 infants	\$87,819	\$88,250
2 infants + preschooler	\$89,459	\$89,988
2 infants + school age	\$81,902	\$82,661
2 infants + teenager	\$73,889	\$75,748
Infant + 2 preschoolers	\$91,099	\$91,725
Infant + preschooler + school age	\$83,651	\$84,156
Infant + preschooler + teenager	\$75,637	\$77,243
Infant + 2 school age	\$75,931	\$77,469
Infant + school age + teenager	\$67,918	\$70,556
Infant + 2 teenagers	\$61,158	\$64,722
3 preschoolers	\$92,739	\$93,463
2 preschoolers + school age	\$85,399	\$85,691
2 preschoolers + teenager	\$77,386	\$78,737
Preschooler + 2 school age	\$77,680	\$78,964
Preschool + school age + teenager	\$69,666	\$72,051
Preschoolers + 2 teenagers	\$62,907	\$66,217
3 School age	\$69,960	\$72,278
2 school age + teenager	\$61,947	\$65,365
School age and 2 teenagers	\$55,846	\$59,531
3 teenagers	\$50,031	\$53,696

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The Community Action Advisory Board

The mission of the Fairfax County Community Action Advisory Board is to make a positive difference in the lives of low-income families and individuals in Fairfax County. As partners, the CAAB strives to help people meet their basic needs, to eliminate barriers to self-sufficiency, and to provide economic and social opportunities. As representatives, the CAAB advises the Board of Supervisors of the needs, concerns and aspirations of low-income persons, recommending policies that promote meaningful change.

Want to make a difference?

The CAAB meets the first Tuesday of each month (except November) at 7:30 p.m. in Conference Rooms 9 & 10 of the Fairfax County Government Center. The public is invited to attend. If you would like more information on the CAAB, call 703-324-7800, TTY: 703-222-9425 or visit the CAAB's Web site at: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/caab



Fairfax County

Community Action Advisory Board

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Fairfax County is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in all county programs, services and activities. Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request. For information, call 703-324-7800; TTY 703-222-9452. To request this information in an alternate format, call 703-324-7800; TTY 703-222-9452.